

# PERFORMANCE

WHERE PROS REVEAL THE SECRETS OF THEIR GAME

## MEDITATE LIKE MESSI

Boffins find a bit of post-match serenity can boost recovery times. So altogether now: 'ommm'...



Here's the ultimate boon for every idle player: it turns out you can aid your own recovery with simple rumination. Researchers from Ullevål University Hospital in Norway report that sportsmen who use meditation after tough training sessions reduce their production of lactate – the ache-inducing by-product of anaerobic exercise – and recover their fitness levels faster.

In recovery tests carried out on athletes split into groups, researchers noted that the blood lactate levels were significantly lower after exercise among the men who'd been taught to meditate when compared to other groups.

"In meditation, one looks to develop a balance of effortless relaxation and applied focus," explains Andy Puddicombe, meditation expert with getsomeheadspace.com, who cites Lionel Messi as a good example of someone with balance in abundance. "But it also helps to develop spatial awareness, mental endurance and pain management."

Puddicombe, who lists a number of Premier League footballers among his clients, insists that just 10 minutes of simple meditation can provide the perfect after-game pain relief. "Muscles grow and get stronger when we're resting, not when we're exercising," he says. "So getting enough of the right kind of rest is essential."

For meditation advice and benefits visit [getsomeheadspace.com](http://getsomeheadspace.com)

Performance editor Hitesh Ratna; Words Rob Kemp

### THE FOURFOURTWO PERFORMANCE PANEL

Meet the experts available to answer your questions about playing the game

#### FITNESS

**Simon Bitcon** Head of conditioning, Man City

Simon's been putting City's globetrotting stars through their paces since joining from Blackburn in 2008, and knows everything worth knowing about fitness.



#### TACTICS

**Gary Speed** Wales manager and top-flight veteran

After making more Premier League appearances than any other outfield player, Gary took over the Wales job in 2010.



#### PLAYING

**Bobby Zamora** Fulham striker

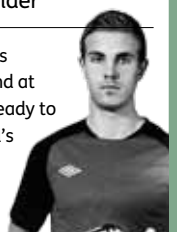
The Fulham targetman, who has played over 200 top flight games, reveals the secret of team chemistry.



#### TECHNIQUE

**Jordan Henderson** Liverpool midfielder

The 21-year-old has represented England at four levels, and is ready to be part of Liverpool's new era under Kenny Dalglish.





## SLACKERS REJOICE

For those who disappear just before the stretching starts, there's good news: research suggests that lower intensity warm-ups result in less muscle fatigue and 6.2 per cent more power output. You now have permission to put your feet up.



## STEP BACK TO RECOVERY

New research says walking and pedalling backwards in the gym is the best way to speed up recovery from knee injuries. Studies show that going in reverse helps build quadriceps and hamstring strength faster than going forward does.

## AIR SHOTS

According to new US research, performing daily breathing exercises for six weeks significantly reduces the amount of oxygen the breathing muscles require during exercise. This could make more oxygen available for other muscles, improving your endurance performance by up to 15 per cent.

## FIT THE BEACH!

For a fast-track to fitness this season, be sure to have a kickaround in the sand. For every 1.4 minutes moving, beach players spend one minute resting – whereas in 11-a-side games players get around 3.5 minutes rest for every minute spent in the thick of the action.

## CORE TRAINING

Ditch the half-time orange and take a bite out of an apple instead, for long-term fitness benefits. US research shows that compounds in apple peel help keep muscles and joints supple, while also prodding your stamina and fitness levels by improving lung function.

# 10 THINGS WE'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

## TWO DAYS DOWN

Fatigue – it's a 48-hour thing. According to new research from Italy into the levels of fatigue experienced by players during and after a game, the ideal recovery period is 48 hours. By that time performance and muscles had returned to normal.

# 88%

That's how many footballers from all levels successfully make a full comeback after leg or foot fractures. Advances in complex surgery mean the chances of returning to play again are higher than ever.

## PLAYING A SLEEPER SYSTEM

This may explain why Michael Essien needs 14 hours of much-needed shut-eye every night to refresh him. According to a study of sleep disorders in South Africa, footballers are more likely to suffer a sleepless night after a big game than before.

## HELP YOURSELF

Take a few minutes to assess your strengths and weaknesses and your game will develop mentally and physically says Ken Way, author of *Mental Mastery - Tried and tested techniques for exceptional sports performance*.



## BIG ISSUE

A 12-week sports medicine study of 22 homeless men found that those who played football for an hour, three times a week, recorded better health improvement than those who cycled. The benefits of a kickaround included an increase in lean body mass as well as a drop in cholesterol.



[ You ask, we answer ]

# Time your run to perfection

Dutch master Ruud van Nistelrooy on how shrewd positioning can help you dodge the trap

**“I’m always getting caught offside trying to make runs in behind the defence. Any tips?”**

**Ben Dolan**, via email



**Ruud van Nistelrooy**  
Malaga frontman

“Positioning is crucial. The three good positions to take up are in between the two centre-halves, between the right-back and the right centre-half or the left-back and the left centre-half. You then move from there.

If you hang back behind the defender, he has to look over his shoulder to see you. When he’s watching the ball he doesn’t know where you are. Stand offside until the moment the ball is played – that’s crucial. If you’re offside, the defender is always checking where you are, which makes them drop deeper. Tailor your run for the person on the ball – if a defender has the ball and he’s likely to play a 60-yard pass into the channel, make a run to suit that pass.

If someone like Paul Scholes has the ball, who can play a through- ball, adjust your run accordingly. As he pulls his leg back to pull the trigger, bend your run to come back onside and then run in behind to chase the pass.”

*Ruud van Nistelrooy was speaking on behalf of Heineken. For more news and information on Heineken, visit [facebook.com/Heineken](http://facebook.com/Heineken)*

Watch what your players are doing on the ball to time your run says Van the Man



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Despite playing in four fewer games than offside king David Villa, Zlatan Ibrahimovic strayed offside the most in the Champions League last term (17 in eight games)

Interview Ben Welch

**“My corners always go to waste. Do you have any tips for whipping in a better delivery?”**

**Dave Lowe**, via email



**Sebastian Larsson**  
Sunderland winger

“Working out a routine on the training ground is very important. You need to know what players are running where and they need to know where you’re aiming to hit. Then the key is

putting the ball in a dangerous area – a zone where people are going to attack the ball and it’s difficult to defend.

Don’t think too much about what the goalkeeper’s going to do. Focus on your technique and hitting the right area. If you do that it’s going to be difficult for the goalkeeper and defenders. After

that it’s up to your team-mates to attack the ball.

I try to put a lot of power into my delivery and make it dip at the last minute – when the ball is high and dips at the last second it’s very difficult to defend. Try to connect with the ball slightly to the side, off the valve with your sidefoot, but almost with the laces – this gives the delivery power and makes it move up and down.”



Make it dip at the last moment to give the keeper nightmares, says Sebastian

Interview Ben Welch

DID YOU KNOW?

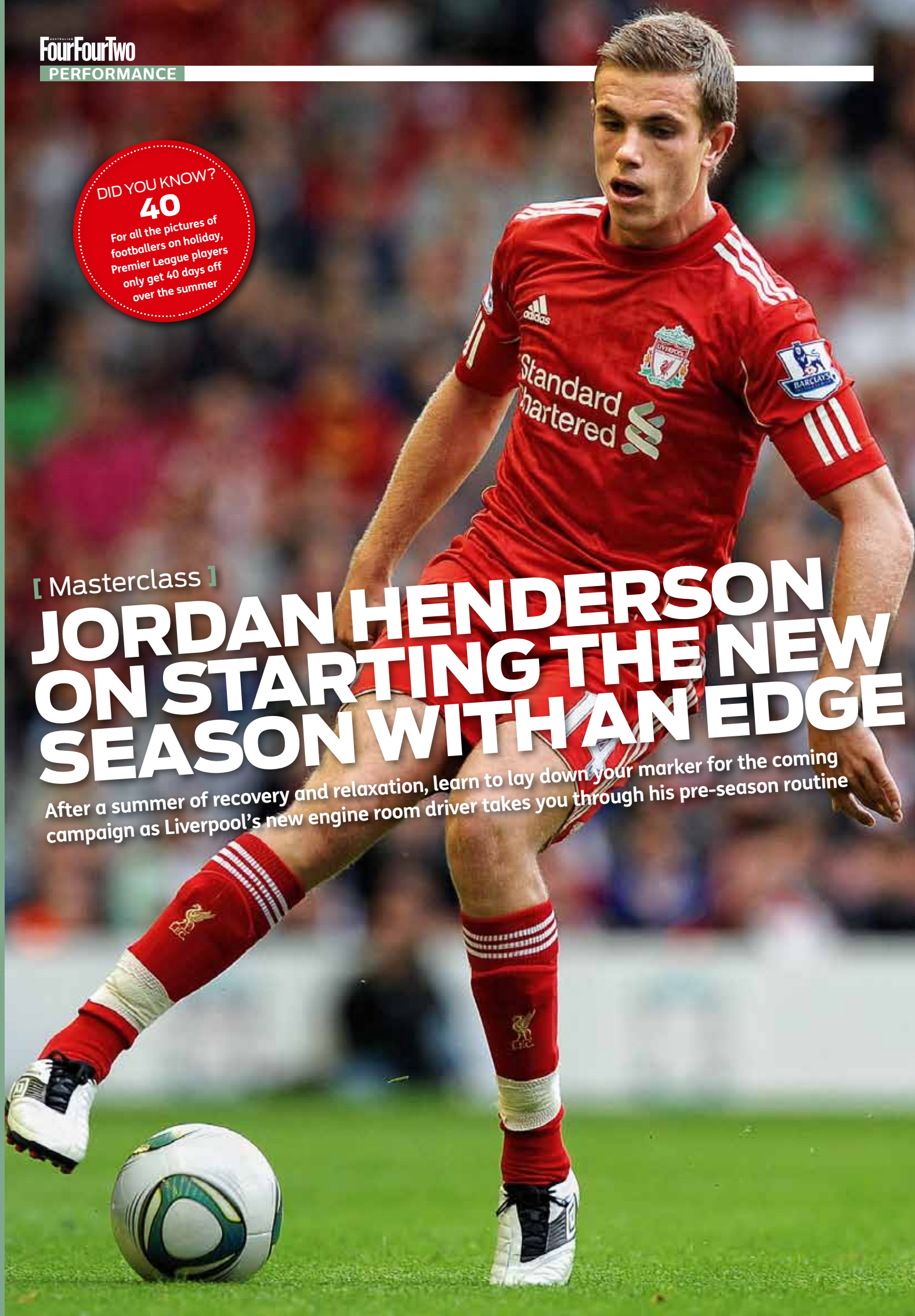
**40**

For all the pictures of footballers on holiday, Premier League players only get 40 days off over the summer

[ Masterclass ]

# JORDAN HENDERSON ON STARTING THE NEW SEASON WITH AN EDGE

After a summer of recovery and relaxation, learn to lay down your marker for the coming campaign as Liverpool's new engine room driver takes you through his pre-season routine





### 1 Get a headstart

Return to pre-season raring to go

"Give yourself a couple of weeks off, but then start doing light training a few weeks before the start of pre-season. Begin with plenty of running – aim for three times a week. Run for 30-40 minutes at the same pace to get your body back into exercise, building up to interval training. This involves running for 15 seconds, jogging for 15, running for 30, jogging for 30 and so on. Complete this at three-quarter pace and try doing four sets of each – so four runs for 15 seconds, four for 30 seconds."



### 2 Keep it simple at first

Reacquaint yourself with the ball

"For the first five to 10 minutes get used to the ball, then as soon as you're comfortable start expressing yourself and take a few risks. Go out there and enjoy yourself. Make sure you do all the right things and work as hard as you can to get your body in the fittest possible condition. When the first game of the season comes you want to be in the starting line-up and the sharpest player at the club."



### 3 Hard work pays off

Put the time in to impress the gaffer

"Pre-season is a good opportunity to make a first impression, so put in the extra work. If you're on your own, set up a circuit of ladders, hurdles and cones heading for goal. Use your footwork to negotiate the ladders and hurdles, then have a ball to dribble through the cones and finish with a shot. If you're working with team-mates introduce a pass, a give-and-go or a header instead of shooting a dead ball."



### 4 Eat smart to keep sharp

Power your body with the right fuel

"When you're not exercising and resting, take on less carbohydrates and focus on protein. Then when you start training you switch the focus around, but don't overload on the carbs – build up your intake as the intensity of your training increases. Protein will also help your muscles recover. Before training I have cereal or toast, and after training I'll have pasta or white fish for lunch. For dinner I'll go for salad, vegetables and chicken."



### 5 Rest to recover

It's essential you don't overdo it

"After a session you need to give your body time to recover. I like to go to the pool to do some dynamic stretching in the water and jogging on the spot to loosen the muscles. As you get closer to your first friendly, recovery becomes even more important. To speed this up, make sure you're getting plenty of fluid in your system after training. The day after a friendly, concentrate on recovery. This could be with a light upper-body weights session, a pool session, an ice bath or maybe a light training session."



### 6 Target success

Set goals and buy into the team ethos

"Before the season starts it's important that everyone in the team knows what you're trying to achieve and how you're trying to achieve it. When the first game arrives, focus on what you want to do in the match. I set myself the target of being the best player on the pitch. As a midfielder I aim to make an assist, so I think about making the right pass for the strikers. Is he quick? Does he like the ball to his feet? Does he like it in behind? Once I've made the pass I follow it and get in the box."

Interview Ben Welch

PRO TIP

**FRANK LAMPARD**  
The Chelsea man on being the quickest off the mark



"When I was younger my dad told me I wasn't the quickest and that I had to work hard on it, so ever since then I have done a lot of speed work.

You can't turn yourself into a speed machine, but you can make small differences by being a step ahead in your mind. For example, I do five 10-yard sprints from a standing start to work on my speed off the mark.

I've played with many players that are quick, but not quite so clever. I think if you're one step ahead mentally you can have the edge.

Try to read the game: watch your opponents and team-mates so you can anticipate their next move. When you haven't got the ball, look around you – know what you're going to do with it before it arrives."

[ Psychology ]

# Character team building

From stand-up comics to Buddhist monks who've taken a vow of silence, Fulham and England hotshot Bobby Zamora identifies the mix of personalities every team needs to be winners

## THE MOANER

It's good to have a moaner in the team. They get their point across and tell you how they feel, which is good. We could probably do with one or two more moaners because Dickson Etuhu seems to take it all on his shoulders – he loves a moan. Every team needs someone who moans because it makes you remember that you're out there for a reason – to perform and win.



## THE JOKER

There are so many serious characters in the changing room that you need a joker to break the tension. Too much tension can affect certain players. Other people are deadly focused and a bit too serious; I like to make people smile, and for the training ground to be a buzzing and happy place. It's more relaxing that way. But when it's game time, I'm fully focused.

## THE ZEN MASTER

Things go on in games and dressing rooms and a calming influence helps the team relax. We have that in Aaron Hughes. He's not a big talker, but he takes things on board and he's a very calming influence in the changing room. It's a talent in itself to be able to stay that calm and cool in every situation. Every team needs a player with that quality.



## THE ORGANISER

When it comes to set-pieces, Brede Hangeland and Mark Schwarzer organise the team and bark orders. Under Roy Hodgson we were probably the most organised team in the country, maybe in Europe, and that made us very hard to beat. If you haven't got the most gifted or athletic players but everybody knows their job, then your team will be a success.

## THE SERGEANT MAJOR

When things haven't gone your way you need someone to come in at half-time, get the cattle prod out and get everyone going. At Brighton, Danny Cullip and Charlie Oatway were really good at that. If you weren't doing the business they let you know. You didn't want to be on the end of that.



## THE WORKHORSE

Mark Schwarzer never stops training. In the last year he's put in a lot of work in the gym and turned himself into an absolute beast. It certainly inspires the rest of us to follow suit and work harder in training and in the gym.



*Bobby Zamora has been an official Under Armour sponsored ambassador for five years.*



[ Tactics ]

# SCORE FROM A FREE-KICK

Wales manager Gary Speed outlines the art of firing in a successful set-piece from out wide

**"It's all about delivery. I tell players to curl the ball towards the far post, as that's the most difficult area for a keeper to cover. If everyone misses it, as we saw recently between England and Switzerland, then the ball goes in at the far post. Frank Lampard is one of the best practitioners of that type of free-kick.**

If the defence start too deep they make it difficult for the keeper. If the defence start high, there's more space to put the ball in – but then the keeper can come and get it. Defensively, it's better to start high.

If we have the free-kick then I tell the players to attack the ball. A lot of goals are scored from second balls so it's very important to keep the ball alive – an attacker might get a header off a keeper's touch.

It's difficult to defend the initial free-kick, but it's even more difficult to defend the second ball because the defenders have got to pick up players while watching the ball. Make sure that you have a good spread of players around the penalty area because you never know who the ball will fall to."

Interview Andy Mitten

**PRO TIP**

## SPEED ON MOTIVATING A TEAM OF UNDERDOGS

Be confident, work hard and stick to the plan

**1 Fill them with confidence**  
Before a game, I'd never downplay the ability of your opponents. I think it's better for players to just know their strengths and weaknesses.

You have to fill your own players with confidence: tell them how good they are and that it's vital they stick to the game plan.

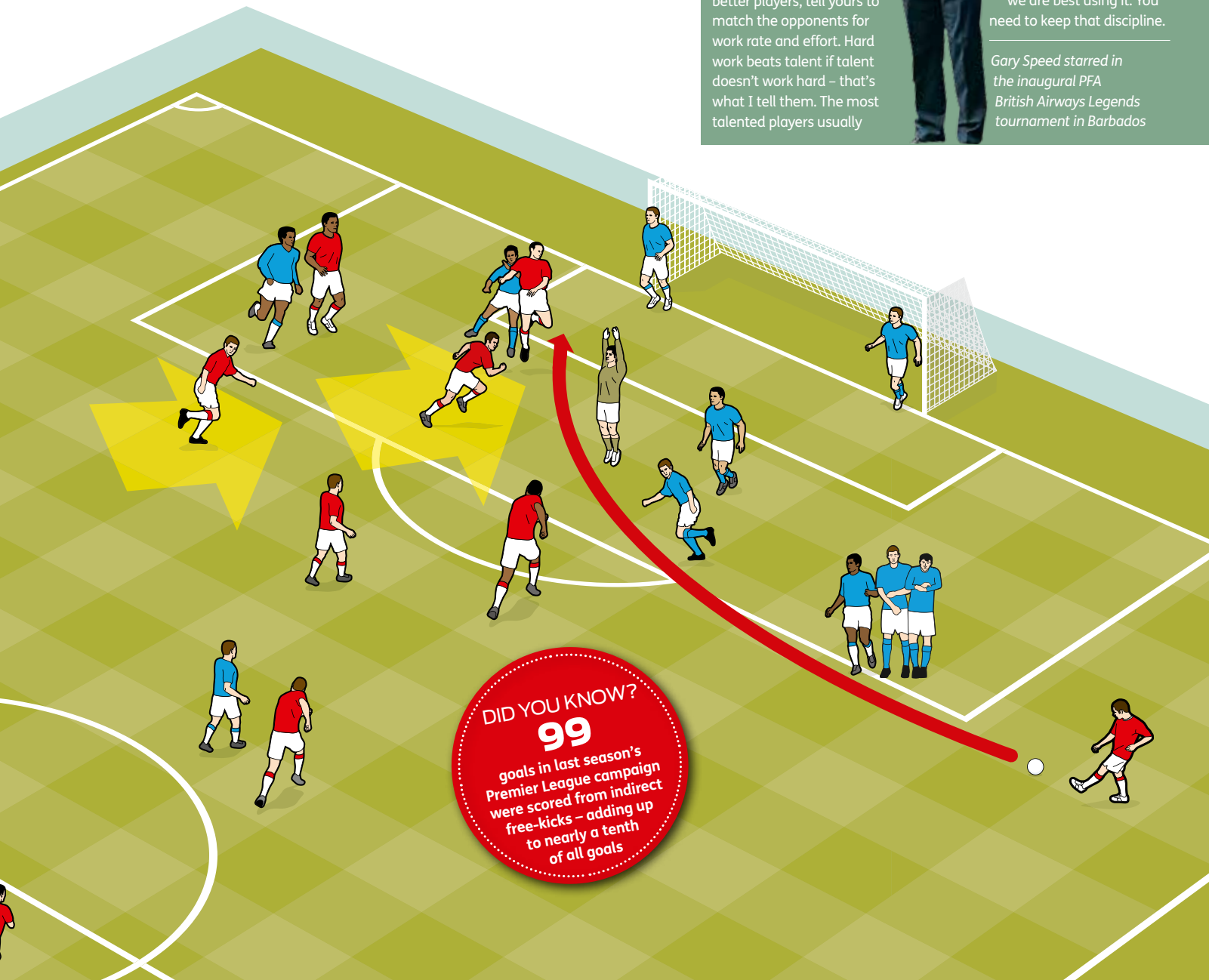
**2 Work can beat talent**  
If you're playing a side with technically better players, tell yours to match the opponents for work rate and effort. Hard work beats talent if talent doesn't work hard – that's what I tell them. The most talented players usually

work harder than anyone. We have to better that work rate.

**3 Don't drop the plan**  
If you are underdogs and do go behind then it's easy to abandon the game plan and do things differently, but it's important for a player's development that they stick to it. I might need to explain that at half-time, and outline the reasons why we had a plan and why we are best using it. You need to keep that discipline.



Gary Speed starred in the inaugural PFA British Airways Legends tournament in Barbados



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
**99**  
goals in last season's Premier League campaign were scored from indirect free-kicks – adding up to nearly a tenth of all goals